The Book of Revelation

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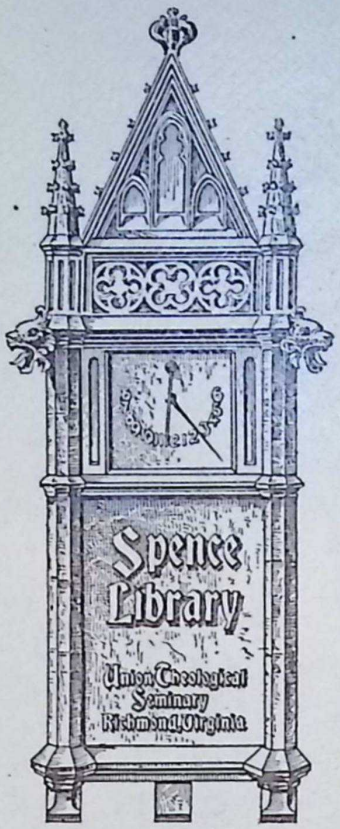

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Dr. W. W. Moore

THE BOOK
OF
REVELATION

GEORGE FREDERICK NICOLASSEN

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PREFACE

The contents of this book have been derived almost entirely from Rev. Dr. J. B. Ramsey's *Spiritual Kingdom*, a book that is now out of print. The subject has been presented for a number of years to a Sunday-school class, the personnel of which changed each session. In response to a number of requests, chiefly from former students, the substance of the lectures is now given to the public in book form. Thanks are due to the proprietors of the *Christian Observer* for their courtesy in giving consent to this publication, as the lectures were printed in that paper some years ago.

The treatment is not intended to be exhaustive. There are so many difficulties in the interpretation of prophetic literature that he would be a bold man who should undertake to say the last word on the subject. At the same time, Dr. Ramsey has seemed to give a clear light on some parts, and it was thought worth while to make the gist of his book accessible, in convenient form, to the many earnest students of God's Word who have found this part of the Bible hard to understand.

G. F. NICOLASSEN.

Oglethorpe University, Ga., Feb. 3, 1917.

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THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

I. Rev. 1.—Introduction and Vision of the Saviour.

II. Rev. 2-3.—The Seven Letters.

III. Rev. 4-8:1.—The Seven Seals.

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CHAPTER I.

Introduction and Vision of the Saviour.

(Rev. 1.)

Vision of the Saviour

The book of Revelation is probably the most difficult of the New Testament, if not of the whole Bible. Its difficulty arises chiefly from the bold use of figures which, to the less imaginative minds of western nations, seem strange and unnatural, though many of them are based on the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. Because of its seeming obscurity this book has been less read than many other parts of the Scripture, in spite of the blessing that is pronounced upon him who reads and those who hear. A few passages are familiar, but not many Bible students have any idea of the unity of the book. The mere fact that it is a part of God's message to His people should be a proof that it is intended not to puzzle us, but to be understood.

The scope of this work is not to give an exhaustive treatment of the subject, but to attempt to remove some of the difficulties, to create a desire for more light and thus lead to further study.

The word Revelation (observe that it is not plural), comes from the Latin and means the same as Apocalypse, which is of Greek origin, viz.: *Drawing Back the Vail.* It gives a view of the future of the Church of Christ, its trials and its triumphs. Let it be understood, however, that the numbers which the book

contains have a spiritual application, and give no intimation of the times or the seasons "which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7). We miss the object of the unveiling if we put into these symbols a meaning which they do not contain, and besides puzzling ourselves with useless speculations, fail to gain a spiritual truth which we might receive.

The author is the beloved disciple, one of that inner circle of three, he who leaned upon Jesus' breast at the last supper. He seems to have been the only disciple present at the crucifixion. To him was committed the Saviour's mother. He was the first to believe in his Lord's resurrection (John 20:8). "His was a fine-grained, spiritual mind, a nature peculiarly sympathetic with Jesus." His gospel contains more of the words of Christ than any of the other three. Thus he was well fitted to be the bearer of the last message that the Saviour wished to send to his church.

The brief outline shown on page 5 will serve to give an idea of the unity of the book; and the designations, while not exhaustive, present the most important parts, around which the others may be grouped.

The word "shortly" in vs. 1 and the expression, "The time is at hand" in vs. 3, might seem to limit the prophecy to the apostle's own day or to the time immediately following. But, while it is true that the principles here set forth were soon to begin their operation, still it must be remembered that the seer's

vision may extend to the end of time. (In fact, such writers sometimes use the past tense of scenes that have appeared to them, though the events be yet future. See Jude 14, R. V.) All time is but short when compared to eternity, and might be so spoken of even by one not inspired.

Reference has been made to the blessing pronounced upon the study of this book, but we must add an important item—"They that hear the words of this prophecy *and keep those things which are written* therein"; unless we have a higher motive than mere intellectual curiosity, we shall fail to gain the chief benefit which the study of this book is designed to give. The truths are to be received into the heart and to have their effect upon the life.

The salutation is the one that the apostle Paul uses so often—"Grace and peace"—grace, the favor of God; and peace, all the blessedness that flows from that favor. "From him which is and which was and which is to come"—God the Father, the Eternal One, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. "From the seven spirits which are before his throne" —the Holy Spirit in the variety and perfection of his operations. "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth"—it is grace and peace attested by the Son of God himself, made sure by his resurrection from the dead, as the first fruits of them that sleep in him, and carried forward to its perfect consummation by his supreme

and universal dominion. Thus all the persons of the Trinity are expressly mentioned in the greeting.

In the fifth and sixth verses the writer seems to pause, after the manner of the apostle to the Gentiles, to give expression to his intense feeling of love and adoration. "Unto him that washed (loosed, R. V.) us from our sins in his own blood—be glory and dominion for ever and ever." The honor to which the redeemed shall be raised is expressed by the terms "kings and priests"—royal dignity and holiness of character with close, intimate communion with God even greater than any of the race of Aaron ever had. Under the Christian dispensation every believer is a priest and a king. The coming of the Saviour and Judge shall be in splendor and shall cause dismay and anguish to the impenitent. To emphasize the certainty of these things is added the expression, "Amen," the "Verily" of the gospels. Then the Lord himself speaks—he is the same from first to last, existing in all time, and all-powerful to carry out his predictions.

The seven churches were not the only ones in Proconsular Asia, but to the Hebrew mind the number seven signified completeness (e. g., the seven days of creation). These seven churches are addressed as representing all Christian churches of every age and nation. The message is for us as well as for those to whom it is directly addressed.

With a bare allusion to his own condition of banishment, the inspired writer proceeds to give an account

of the time and scene of his first vision. It was the Lord's day, when he would be more than usually devout and worshipful. The scene of the vision bears a resemblance to the Holy Place of the Temple. In the center of it was the altar of incense; on the north side, at the right hand of one entering, was the table of shew-bread (Ex. 40:22); on the south side the candlestick (or lamp stand), with its seven branches.* And, the vail of the temple having been rent in twain, the Divine Majesty appears, but also like unto the Son of man; it can be none other than the God-Man, the Saviour himself. He is clothed in a priest's robe with a princely girdle. "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow"—not the whiteness of age, but the glow of splendor; "his eyes as a flame of fire"—omniscient purity; "his feet like unto fine brass, as though they glowed in a furnace"—his holy and resistless providence; "his voice as the sound of many waters"—the utterance of his decrees. In his right hand were seven stars, symbolizing, with the seven golden candlesticks amid which he walked, his church upon earth. (The close union between him and his church is shown by his holding the stars in his hand, and his walking among the candlesticks.) "Out of his mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword"—his all-piercing word of good to those who love him, of evil to those who will not serve him. "His countenance as the sun shineth in his strength"—the light and

*This was the form of the lamp stand in the tabernacle, and probably in Herod's temple.

power of unapproachable holiness. I think the beloved disciple must have recalled that day upon the mountain when he, with Peter and James, saw the divinity of their Lord bursting through his humanity (Matt. 17:6). If that view caused them to be "sore afraid," this one was overpowering—"I fell at his feet as dead." But the blessed Master, as on the former occasion, touched him and said, "Fear not." This injunction applies not only to John, but to us also, when the Saviour comes to us in his providence; and the reasons are the same:

1. The speaker is divine—"I am the first and the last and the living one" (R. V.)

2. His atonement is complete—"I became dead and behold I am alive for evermore."

3. He has universal dominion—"I have the keys of hell and of death," controlling the spiritual as well as the material world.

The apostle is then directed to write the mystery of the seven stars and the seven candlesticks, the symbols whose meaning is made known by revelation. A star is a symbol of power and authority; the office of a candlestick (or lamp stand) is to hold up the light. We have then the two-fold duty of every true church—to hold up the light which it receives, and to exercise the authority which is delegated to it—its worship and its discipline. The seven candlesticks instead of one set forth the truth that the church now is manifold; but they do not originate the light and cannot improve it. The candlesticks show the relation of the church to the world; the stars, its relation to God.

CHAPTER II.

The Seven Letters.

(Rev. 2, 3.)

1. Ephesus—Declining Love.
2. Smyrna—Persecution.
3. Pergamos—Friendship of the World.
4. Thyatira—Heresy.
5. Sardis—Spiritual Deadness.
6. Philadelphia—Spiritual Power.
7. Laodicea—Lukewarmness.

The Seven Letters

In the first chapter we had the clear intimation that the Church of Christ is the subject of this whole book—the mystery of the seven stars and the seven candlesticks. After this symbolical representation we have in chapters 2 and 3 a description of the spiritual state of seven churches, their leading virtues and defects, setting forth the chief characteristics of the church of that day, and serving as specimens of the church in all ages.

Before entering upon the consideration of each letter separately there are certain features common to all, that will claim our attention.

1. In the first place, the Saviour himself dictates the letters; the apostle is merely the amanuensis. This is after the manner of the gospel of John, which contains so many of the discourses of Christ. The use of the first person gives a directness and force to the letters which would not be felt if the third person were used.

2. Next, the angel, or messenger of the church is probably not the title of any one officer, but refers collectively to the authority in each congregation wherever it is lodged.

3. Each letter begins with a characteristic of the divine author, which is specially adapted to the church addressed. These are usually derived from

the description of him already given in the first chapter.

4. Then follow the words—"I know thy works." (The R. V. has dropped them in two cases—2 and 3.) This is the first great fact to be impressed upon the heart after the glory of Christ himself. It is a message of consolation to the afflicted and of warning to the unfaithful.

5. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This is a call to universal attention, and reminds us of the language of the gospels, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

6. The individual, personal nature of Christianity is still further shown by the promises to "him that overcometh." This phrase calls to mind also the fact that the Christian life is not a mere passive thing; it is a warfare, a constant struggle, requiring the unremitting exercise of all the powers.

7. The promises. The first four carry us back to the typical dispensation, the Old Testament economy:

(*a*) To the church at Ephesus it is said that the victor shall "eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The bliss that Adam lost shall be restored in Christ. This tree of life will reappear in the last chapter and will receive fuller notice there.

(*b*) The second promise is in close connection with the first. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." The curse brought upon the race by Adam's sin shall be

removed. And although physical death cannot be avoided, its nature is changed. It becomes the means of severing the connection with the first Adam, in order that we may be joined to the second.

(*c*) The third promise relates to the eating of the hidden manna. This was the memorial portion that was laid up in the ark (Ex. 16:32f). Could there be a more impressive way of saying that the spiritual victor shall enjoy a privilege that was not allowed even to the high priest, that he shall experience the blessedness of communion with God closer than mortal has ever known? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The "white stone" mentioned in the same verse may signify the stone of acquittal, or it may refer to the Urim and Thummim in the breastplate of the high priest. If the latter be the correct interpretation, it would indicate the possession of direct communication with God and readiness of ascertaining the divine will. And the "new name" signifies new and higher blessings, which only the redeemed shall understand.

(*d*) To the priestly privileges thus set forth is added, in the next place, royal power such as the greatest of Jewish kings possessed—"power over the nations (Gentiles); he shall rule them with a rod of iron." All the triumphs of Christ

are achieved for the sake of the humblest of his redeemed followers. "And I will give him the morning star." In the twenty-second chapter Christ himself is called the morning star. Thus each conqueror shall share in his Lord's glory. (*e*) The fifth promise speaks of "white raiment"—"the righteousness of saints (ch. 19:8), both that which is imputed to them and that which is wrought in them by the Holy Spirit. Their names shall not be blotted out of the book of life, but shall be confessed before the Father and His angels.

(*f*) The sixth promise represents the spiritual victor as having a permanent abode in the house of his Father, where Christ has gone to prepare a place for his people—"he shall be a pillar in the house of my God and he shall go no more out." He shall become one of that perfect and glorious society around the throne, and a citizen of the New Jerusalem.

(*g*) The seventh promise is the climax of the whole—"he shall sit with me on my throne." This is more than the "power over the nations." That refers to the final act of conquest; this to the peaceful reign that shall follow. This reign shall be one in which there will be no evil to be restrained, no laws to be enforced by the infliction of penalties. The will of the king shall pervade every soul. The union between Christ and his people shall be so complete that there shall be one life, one body, one throne.

Coming now to the more particular consideration of the letters separately, we observe that only two of the churches are addressed without some censure, the second and the sixth, Smyrna and Philadelphia; and only one without some commendation, the seventh, Laodicea. In each of the other cases there is a mixture of praise and blame. In each church there is a prevailing trait that distinguishes it from the others.

At Ephesus it was Declining Love. It was orthodox, zealous for the truth, and had shown endurance. They also hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans (perhaps the same as the teaching of Balaam)—that is, they were strict in the administration of discipline. "But I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." There had been a religion of the head rather than of the heart. A call is made to repentance and to a retracing of its steps if it would retain its candlestick. This is the message from him that "holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." He is present in his church. To him every heart is open; and though the outward conduct be right, if love be wanting there is a fatal defect.

The church at Smyrna had suffered Persecution. To cheer and encourage them, they are reminded that their Lord is the ever-living one, that he had been dead and had been made alive. It is not promised that they shall be delivered from suffering nor from death. It is just in line with the Saviour's warning when he was upon earth that they should

have persecution; indeed, the fact that they were thus treated would be an evidence that they did not belong to the world, but to Christ. They are exhorted to be faithful unto death—that is, even though faithfulness should bring death. They are to be sustained by that same grace which Paul was assured should be sufficient for him. The church in all ages and the individual believer may appropriate the promise, and be assured that perseverance shall be rewarded with a crown of life, and with security from the second death. But each must learn that, if in answer to prayer his trouble is not removed, it is a necessary part of his sanctification. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." There may be tribulation "ten days"—a limited period; they may have poverty in earthly goods, but they shall "have treasure in heaven." Unbelieving church members, who are the synagogue of Satan, may persecute them, as did Saul of Tarsus; but the Saviour knows it all and will not allow it to go too far.

Pergamos represents the Friendship of the World. THE WORLD is anything that opposes Christianity, no matter what form it may take; anything that lessens our interest in spiritual things, that defiles the purity of our minds; everything from which God is excluded, however lovely in itself, if its object be anything but the glory of God, it is the *World*. So Satan's seat (or throne) is said to be there. Some held to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Israel to sin (see Numbers 31:16). Thus "thou also" (as well as Ephesus), "hast them that hold the doctrine of the

Nicolaitans" (possibly the same, as we have said, with the doctrine of Balaam). This church had some good points; one of their number had even suffered martyrdom; they held fast the name of Christ and had not denied his faith. But there was danger that they might be corrupted, as Israel of old had been, and they are warned, by him "which hath the sharp sword with two edges," to repent, as the Ephesian church had been. The evil tendencies must be checked, or the people would be visited with quick and sharp punishment. But observe how tenderly and carefully he discriminates between his church and these unworthy members. "I will come unto thee and will fight against *them*." These visitations have a two-fold aspect; though they inflict deep and sore wounds upon his true people, they tend to their purification; but against those who seek the friendship of the world and the indulgence of the flesh, he comes to make a war of extermination.

At Thyatira a foul Heresy had crept in; and as false doctrines generally lead to wicked acts, great immorality had ensued. "Jezebel" seems to be used as the personification of this heresy and its consequences—a name fitly chosen, as the foreign wife of Ahab had introduced idolatry among the people of Israel. The faithful ones had shown some of the fruits of the spirit—charity (or love), service, faith, patience, and there had been growth—the last were more than the first. No other duty is laid upon them but to oppose this heresy and not to be misled by the "depths of Satan," the subtleties which were

used to justify these things. All the churches shall know that it is Christ which searcheth the reins and hearts, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire and his feet like unto fine brass.

Sardis—Spiritual Deadness. The very danger of Sardis was its insensibility. It was not conscious of any failure. The outward duties were performed —they had "a name to live"; they had some works, but these were not "perfect before God." These outward acts may be kept up by artificial means, by mere habit or for appearance' sake. But if they are not done from the right motive, they are worthless—it is death. They are called upon to wake up, as one would waken a man who was about to freeze to death, and to strengthen the things which remain, relying upon him that hath the seven spirits of God, the Holy Spirit in the variety and perfection of his manifestations, the giver of life. They are to be constrained by gratitude, remembering how they had received and had heard. If they fail to heed the warning, their doom will be swift and unexpected. But a few, even in Sardis, had not defiled their garments, and they should be counted worthy of walking with their Lord in spotless raiment.

Philadelphia is one of the two churches that receive only commendation. Not that they were free from defects, but they relied upon his blood for salvation and not upon human works. As Smyrna was the type of a suffering church, so Philadelphia represents Spiritual Power. "Thou hast little strength (not "*a* little"). But that very weakness had made

them lean upon Jesus and draw from him stores of divine power. Thus they had kept his word and had not denied his name. What greater blessing could be conferred upon a faithful, trusting church than to have increased opportunities of usefulness? "Behold, I have set before thee an opened door which no one (stronger than "no man") can shut." This promise is from him that "hath the key of David," from him "that openeth and no one shutteth." And could there be a more glorious triumph, either for a church or for an individual, over them of the synagogue of Satan, those who have used all their power to hinder, than to have them come and acknowledge their error, worship the same God with their victims, and thus bear witness to the power of that Christianity which had sustained the oppressed? "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee." "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation"—not that they shall avoid it, but be brought in safety through it, as in the case of Smyrna. But the time of trial shall not be long—"Behold, I come quickly." After it is all over, the season of discipline will not seem to have been long, compared with the never-ending bliss that awaits the faithful.

Laodicea—Lukewarmness. This is the only church that receives no commendation. Lukewarmness, indifference, is even more loathsome than active opposition; for in the latter there is an activity that at least does not arouse contempt, and which may be

turned in the right direction, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus. The Laodiceans *trusted* in their riches, felt no need of stores of grace from above, and yet were in need of everything. "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth"—a short delay for repentance, The Redeemer counsels them to secure the true riches and white raiment and salve for blinded eyes. They are still a church, however, and as the most wayward are often the most loved, he adds: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." And in the most condescending manner he stands at the door and knocks. "And if any man hear my voice and open the door" (by faith), "I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me." And he has all the resources of the Godhead to make good this promise. He is the "Amen, the faithful and true witness"—the revealer of the divine will, "the beginning of the creation of God"—the origin and author of all creation.

CHAPTER III.

The Seven Seals.

The Lamb Conquering.

(Rev. 4-8:1.)

1. The Redeemer—The Agencies of the Gospel.
2. War—Smiting of the World in its Social Relations.
3. Famine—Attack Upon the Supports of the World's Existence.
4. Pestilence and Hades—Attack upon Life Itself.
5. The Martyr's Prayer.
6. Their Prayer Answered.

   Security of The Redeemed.
   - Sealing of the One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand.
   - The White-Robed Throng.

7. Silence—All Opposition Ended.

The Seven Seals

The first scene was suggestive of the holy place in the temple. Now there is a change, and the apostle, upon the invitation of the voice that had spoken to him before, is transported through an open door and finds himself outside the temple building. There is the great sea, like the molten sea of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7:23) and the laver of the tabernacle (Ex. 30:18), signifying the washing of regeneration; this was "of glass, like unto crystal," instead of brass, perhaps indicating the transparent clearness with which the purifying influences of divine grace are now revealed in the spiritual kingdom. The altar of sacrifice is there, too (ch. 6:9). The three persons of the Godhead are again seen. Upon a throne sat one of whom no form is described, but his glory was like precious stones. The lightnings and thunderings and voices express divine energy. But his mercy is represented also; for there is the rainbow of promise, in which the green predominates, the symbol of peace. The Holy Spirit is represented by the seven lamps before the throne (ch. 4:5). And in the fifth chapter the Second Person appears as the lamb slain.

Around the throne sat twenty-four elders, clothed in white robes and with crowns of gold upon their heads—the church in its priestly and kingly dignity.

The number may be intended to refer to the twenty-four courses of priests established by David (1 Chron. 24:4), or twelve may stand for the patriarchs or Old Testament church, and twelve for the apostles or New Testament church. The number twelve and its multiples are often used to designate the church, referring to the twelve tribes of Israel.

But what is meant by the "four beasts," first mentioned at ch. 4:6? In the first place, the word "beast" is unfortunate; for in the original it is a different word from that meaning wild beast used in ch. 13:1. *Living creature* would be a better rendering. Now what is meant by them? Observe that they give unceasing praise to Jehovah; hence they must represent some form of creature existence. Then, they render thanks unto him that sits on the throne (ch. 4:9). This makes it probable that they stand for the redeemed. And this view is confirmed by the fact that they join in the new song, the song of redemption—"thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God with thy blood from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." They represent, then, *Redeemed Humanity*, the life of God in the soul of man. But why this second designation of the people of God, in addition to the twenty-four elders? To express more fully the fact that salvation is a new thing, a creation in the redeemed, which develops until the work of sanctification is complete. In ch. 11:16 the twenty-four elders are mentioned alone; the new nature has been perfected and the symbol is no longer needed.

The study of their nature and actions is interesting and instructive. When we read of the animals which they resemble and the peculiarities of their appearance, we must not think of the monsters which a literal interpretation would bring before us, but of the qualities which these express. The lion is the king of beasts, the type of courage and power; the eagle, the noblest of winged things soaring above the world; the patience of the ox (or calf) and the intelligence of man (ἀνθρώπου) complete this picture of *creature excellence.* The image of God is once more restored, as it was in Eden before the fall.

What is the natural behavior of the perfect creature? To praise the Creator. "They rest not day and night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come.'" "They have six wings"—they are in readiness for the service of their Maker. "They are full of eyes, before, behind and within"—they have perfect perception of their duty to God and man.

The fifth chapter opens with the exhibition of a sealed roll—the hidden purposes of God. It is full of writing on both sides—all things are predetermined by the divine will; nothing is left to chance. No one (instead of "no man"—vs. 3) in the whole universe is found able to loose the seals or to look thereon, until the Lion of the tribe of Judah appears, the Lamb as it had been slain. By his victory over the evil one he has prevailed to open the book. Fulness of power is indicated by his seven horns,

and completeness of knowledge by the seven eyes. By him the Spirit (the Comforter) is sent in all his fulness into all the earth. "He came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne"—the administration of the universe is committed unto him—the mediatorial reign is begun. This act calls forth praise from all the representatives of the church. Their song now is not the song of creation—"Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure (or, by thy will) they are and were created"; but a new song—of redeeming love. The angels, "myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands," respond heartily to this sentiment, and every creature in the universe joins in ascribing equal honor to the Father and to the Son.

At the very outset of our consideration of the seven seals, let it be distinctly understood that they do not refer to specific events of history, but to certain general principles, whose operation is indicated by the breaking of the seals. Nor is their order necessarily significant of succession in time. They may, and frequently do, co-exist, and are often repeated in different ages of the world. This is a principle of great importance for the understanding of these symbols, for by the misuse of them we may get very false notions. The same thing is true of the seven trumpets and the seven vials. Not even is it true that any one of these series is subsequent to another. The general idea of the whole book of Revelation is to set forth the condition of the church. The seven seals are supposed to represent the Lamb Conquer-

ing; the seven trumpets, the Conflict Raging; the seven vials, God's Wrath Descending. After the completion of one series we go back and re-view the history of the church from a different standpoint.

When the first seal was opened, the first living creature said, "Come." (Not "Come and see," as the Authorized Version has it. It is a call, not to the apostle, but to the agency which is to be presented.) A rider upon a white horse appears, with a bow in his hand and a crown upon his head, going forth to extended conquests. This rider reappears in the nineteenth chapter with many crowns and many followers. "And his name is called the Word of God." It is the Saviour going forth to battle with the hosts of sin.

At the opening of the second seal the second living creature called, "Come!" and a red horse appeared. This is a symbol of War. The Son of man came "not to send peace on the earth, but a sword." His coming is not the cause but the occasion of strife. It brings out the previously unseen opposition to the gospel and its claims.

When the third seal was opened, a black horse was seen—Famine. The rider had a pair of balances in his hand. Food is to be weighed, that none be lost. A "measure" or quart of wheat was probably a man's daily allowance of food, and a penny his daily wages; so that nothing would be left for his family and for clothing. "Hurt not the oil and the wine" may be an intimation that the children of God shall be mercifully shielded in the time of dis-

tress. Of such intimations there will be other and plainer examples.

The fourth seal brings a pale horse: his rider is Pestilence or Death, and Hades followed. He has a limited power to cause death.

Under these four symbols are embraced all the forces of the church and the providence of God, which are employed in the conquest of the earth. The first introduces all the agencies of the gospel, as it goes forth with its piercing truths and in the power of its crucified and glorified author; the second smites the opposing worldly interest in all the social relations; the third, all the supports of the world's existence; and the fourth, its very life, burying all earthly good in the darkness of the grave. All earthly powers and joys are under the control of the Lamb, and all the influences which smite these go forth at his bidding.

The opening of the fifth seal brings to view, at the foot of the altar, the Souls of the Martyred Saints. They ask how long they must wait for their vindication, and are told, until number shall be completed, until the death of their brethren who had yet to suffer should fill up the measure of their persecutors' sins. Their persecutors are spoken of as "those who dwell on the earth," in contrast to those who "sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

The sixth seal represents the answer to this prayer —an Earthquake and the Convulsion of all Nature. We are not to seek in each one of these details some spiritual truth. It is of the nature of such language

that many things are put in to complete the picture. "The sun became black as sack-cloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind; and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth and the great men and the rich men and the chief captains and the mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?'" The persecutors of the church and all who oppose the Redeemer's kingdom shall be dismayed when the time has come for the vindication of God's suffering saints.

But this is only one side of the triumph. How has the church been faring during this long and bloody struggle? To complete the view and give the other side of the grand scheme there are added in chapter seven two other scenes in which the Security of the Redeemed is depicted. These scenes are not subsequent to the others, but at least partly contemporaneous. Four angels restrain the four winds of heaven until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. It reminds us of the time in Egypt when the angel of death was kept out of the

houses of the Israelites by the blood at the door. Here it is more clearly indicated that salvation is an individual, personal matter. Each of the twelve tribes has twelve thousand, the numbers twelve and one thousand being used for completeness and vast multitude. Then, as if to make it plainer that the spiritual Israel are not limited to the descendants of Abraham, a great multitude is seen of *all nations*,* standing before the throne and before the Lamb. To the apostle it is explained that the white-robed throng are they who came out of *the* great tribulation of the fifth seal. They have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, and serve God day and night in his temple—the sanctuary, not the outer court; "and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them (or, spread his tent over them)." The sufferings of the great tribulation shall not be repeated. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed (tend) them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The seventh seal brings Silence—all opposition to the Saviour shall have been overthrown, and peace shall reign throughout the universe. The space of half an hour seems intended merely to separate this series of visions from the next.

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*The word translated "Gentiles" in the New Testament is the common word for "nations" (ἐθνη).

CHAPTER IV.

The Seven Trumpets.

The Conflict Raging.

(Rev. 8:2-13.)

Introductory Vision—The Angel with the Censer.

1. Society Overthrown.
2. Governments Overthrown.
3. Ecclesiastical Degeneracy—Sources of Happiness Embittered.
4. Truth Hidden.
5. Heresies Smite Souls—Ecclesiastical Despotism.
6. Revolt of World's Power and Wisdom.

Saving Influences.	Divine Agency.
	Human Instrumentality.
	Divine Rule.
	Two Witnesses.

7. Victory.

Supplementary Visions—Organized Forms of Evil.—Rev. 12-13.

The Seven Trumpets

Thus we have seen God reigning in all gospel influences, in war, in want, in death, and in the sufferings of the martyrs; and in all these He is overturning the world, sealing His chosen and gathering His redeemed around His throne.

Before considering the next series, the Seven Trumpets, there is an introductory vision that claims our attention. It has an intimate connection with the series, as we shall proceed to show. An angel with a golden censer came and stood by the altar of incense, which was before the throne, (the scene is again in the Holy Place). There was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with (or *upon*) the prayers of all saints. The incense represents the intercession of Christ, by which all prayers are made acceptable. And the smoke of this incense ascended up before God; the prayers thus presented are accepted and answered. The angel took fire from the altar, put it into the censer and cast it upon the earth; "and there were voices and thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake." The meaning of all this is simply that the prayers of God's Church, presented with the intercession of the Saviour, bring the visitations of God's wrath upon His enemies. And the fire from the altar indicates that the doctrine of Christ crucified, with its search-

ing, purifying, consuming power, is to be scattered over the world and is to produce the great results. Observe, too, that the prayers of saints are not always answered according to their form, but according to their design; they did not pray for thunderings and lightnings, but for deliverance for themselves and for the nations. The results are presented more in detail as follows:

The first angel sounded and there came hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth. The *earth* here seems to represent consolidated, established society. Trees and grass are the products of the earth, the benefits growing out of such a state of well ordered society, the innumerable enjoyments of civilization. Of the higher and loftier of these a third part is destroyed, and *all* the minor blessings of social order are withered.

When the second trumpet sounded a volcanic mountain is cast into the sea. The *sea* well represents the unsettled state of society resulting from the first trumpet. A mountain, by its firmness and elevation, is readily understood as symbolizing an established form of government. But when it becomes a volcano, instead of giving protection and security to the people, it is a source of misery and ruin; and being cast into the midst of nations already in a state of commotion, produces all the horrors of widespread anarchy and bloody desolation, well symbolized by the third part of the sea turning to blood, and the death of a third of all that lived in it or sailed on it.

At the sound of the third trumpet a great star fell from heaven, burning as it were a lamp. A star, as we have seen, is the symbol of power. This star, falling from heaven, indicates ecclesiastical power descending from its heavenly sphere, where it had been wont to shine with mild and cheering rays, and blazing like a lamp with a smoky and an earthly glare instead of a heavenly light. This star is called Wormwood, and it fell upon a third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters, and the third part of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. The rivers and fountains include all the living waters of the earth on which depend its fertility and habitableness; and these must represent all the springs of earthly happiness that refresh the heart of man and give life to his energies and success to his efforts— family influences, the moral feelings, kindly impulses and mutual confidence. All these are embittered by this falling star. The infliction is indeed limited to the one-third; not all the good is embittered. But to have such a portion as this poisoned is a calamity of fearful extent.

It will be noticed that, when the fourth angel sounds, no new agency is introduced as producing the obscuration of the sun, moon and stars, and darkening them for a third part of the time. The necessary result of the upturning of well ordered society, of the overthrow of civil government and of the degeneracy of church power, is to smite the lights of the world, to hide a portion of the truth shining

upon all subjects pertaining to human happiness. When the three previous inflictions have failed to turn men to repentance, the holy light of the gospel becomes too pure for the eyes of sinful men to bear. They turn away from it, and by their own commotions and their own pretended wisdom obscure the light, and upon every department of useful knowledge great darkness gathers.

Before the next trumpet an angel flies through the midst of heaven, crying, "Woe, woe, woe" (one for each of the next three trumpets) "to the inhabiters of the earth"—the people of the world as opposed to God's church.

Under the first four trumpets every earthly good is smitten; a more terrific plague is now announced by the fifth trumpet, distinct in origin and effects from all before, arising not from any mere worldly good, but issuing from the pit itself and directed against the souls of unbelievers. It is an army of scorpion locusts, of monstrous and unearthly form and power, and can find its full and distinctive realization only in those swarms of hell-begotten heresies that sting and destroy the souls that reject the gospel. The bottomless pit is opened by one who appears as a star fallen from heaven, an ecclesiastical power descended from its heavenly sphere. This is the agent that introduces the dense cloud of unholy influences from which these errors proceed. The key that opens the kingdom of heaven is the truth of salvation by a crucified Redeemer; the key that unlocks the pit is the substitution of anything

in the place of Christ's blood. These locusts have the shape of horses prepared for battle—a belligerent and powerful agency; on their heads were as it were crowns like gold—pretentions to kingly authority; their faces were as the faces of men (ἀνθρώπων)—professions of humanity and benevolence; they had hair as the hair of women—the attractive element; their teeth were as the teeth of lions—a nature cruel and devouring; they had breastplates as it were breastplates of iron—impervious to the truth and to the appeals of their suffering victims; the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses rushing to battle—making a great noise in the world; they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails, showing their deceitful and malicious disposition; and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man; they indicate an agency whose power consisted in the ability to inflict unexpectedly a small wound, whence the virus would extend through the whole moral system.

In Prov. 30:27 it is said that the locusts have no king; but these locusts have a king, the angel of the bottomless pit, Abaddon, Apollyon, both names meaning Destroyer. They are commanded not to hurt the grass nor any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. The products of earthly good are not to be affected by this judgment. The righteous as well as the wicked share in the former afflictions. But only the unregenerate are to be smitten now. These dis-

asters fall upon the souls of men. And only such sufferings are really to be called "torments." External afflictions are merely the fatherly discipline necessary for sanctification.

This soul-destroying error brings on spiritual despotism over the world's power and wisdom. When this tyranny is realized, these worldly principles, power and wisdom, rise in revolt, cast off this dominion, and trample everything sacred with it in the dust. This is the first thing brought forth by the sounding of the sixth trumpet. The full results are depicted in the slaying of the two witnesses (ch. 11) and in the earthquake which follows. This woe comes at the summons of the great Intercessor himself, and in answer to all the prayers of all God's people. *One* voice, from the four horns of the golden altar, is heard. It is the united cry of the Intercessor and his people who have been battling with these errors. And this infliction comes from the very forces which had been tormented by this despotism. "Loose the four angels which are bound in (or *at*) the great river Euphrates." Babylon, the city on the Euphrates, was a type of the world's power triumphing over the church. The Euphrates was the source of her wealth and of her security, and so represents that from which the spiritual Babylon derived her prosperity. These forces are for a time restrained by the delusions that tyrannize over them; the very influences that stimulate them to violent reaction also restrain them until the very moment arrives for which they are prepared. This last idea

is expressed in the words "which were prepared for *the* hour (not '*an* hour') and day and month and year." These forces are represented as horsemen, two myriads of myriads (two hundred thousand thousand)—an expression of vast multitude, and yet the *two* may indicate that they can be classed under two heads—worldly power and worldly wisdom; this sub-division is brought out more fully and clearly in the thirteenth chapter. The character of these forces is set forth in the appearance of the horses and their riders. The horsemen had on breastplates fiery, hyacinthine (purplish blue) and sulphurous, the flames and odors of the pit. The heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. The stealthy nature of the world's wisdom is shown in the fact that the power of these horses to injure is not only in their heads, but also in their tails, which inflict wounds of a deadly character. A third part of men are slain by them, but the rest are unrepentant; they cling to their idolatries and immoralities. This scene gives us a picture of the world's forces in their reaction against the corruptions of a false Christianity, the combination of the world's power and wisdom to throw off the tyranny of spiritual delusions; and while scourging the worldly interest (the third part of men), they spread at the same time the poison of a deep, insidious and professedly philanthropic infidelity.

We have seen that there is no penitence produced by these visitations. A triumph of vengeance would not be a triumph at all in the spiritual king-

dom. Hence, before the seventh angel is permitted to sound, another series of visions is introduced, exhibiting the influences by which this triumph is to be secured, influences which have been all this time working quietly, yet powerfully. They do not interrupt the development of the subject, but form an important part of it. These visions extend from the beginning of ch. 10 to ch. 11:14. There are four prominent symbols—the mighty angel, the eating of the little book, the ordered measurement of holy things, and the two witnesses; or, expressed in other terms, the Divine Agency, the Human Instrumentality, the Divine Rule and the Two Witnesses.

The grandeur by which the angel is attended makes it plain that, though he is not the Lord, he is his representative. He, then, is present in his church, not visibly, not in his human nature, but in power, in spirit. This, then, is the Divine Agency, the first of the symbols of converting power. The gospel is the means by which he works. So the angel had in his hand a little book, open, symbolizing this gospel, no longer shut up in types and shadows. It is little, like the grain of mustard seed, a feeble agency to human vision. Holding this in his right hand, he placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land, thus claiming dominion over all, and cried with a loud voice. "And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voice." These represent God's displayed power. But the seer is bidden to seal up those things which the seven thunders ut-

tered—deep mystery must here ever shroud the workings of divine power, both in providence and in grace. The angel then swears by Jehovah that there shall be delay (not "time") no longer; but in the days of the seventh angel the mystery of God shall be finished.

The apostle is then directed to go and take the little book from the angel and eat it up (cp. Ezek. 3:1-3). The church, which the seer here represents, is to incorporate the gospel into its very life. Thus is brought to view the Human Instrumentality employed in the conversion of the world. This book would at first be sweet, but afterwards bitter. The gospel, as received by faith, fills the soul with joy. But in working it out in the life, in the midst of an ungodly world, in the earnest spiritual appropriation of it in our daily conduct, and in making our lives correspond with its teachings, many bitter experiences are to be had; the secret and deep corruptions of the soul are not eradicated without many a severe pang. But the reference here is rather to the sufferings incurred in bearing testimony before the world—"thou must prophesy again upon many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

In the first two verses of chapter 11 the rule is presented as a rod to measure with and the subjects of this testimony as sacred things to be measured, while unmeasured things are to be rejected. The first great duty of the church is to ascertain with precision the truth in regard to the things of God. The standard by which the truth is to be known, the "reed like unto a rod," can be no other than the

Holy Scriptures. This revelation is complete, and, like the angel's rod, cannot be made either longer or shorter. All real difficulties, in deciding upon questions of duty, arise from the substitution of a standard of our own. Three things are to be measured, "the temple of God, the altar, and they that worship therein." In the spiritual kingdom the three things that answer to these are God reconciled and dwelling among men, the blood of atonement by which this is secured, and a consecrated people. These are the great subjects upon which the church is to become accurately informed. "But the court which is without the temple, leave out (or 'cast out') and measure it not, for it is given to the Gentiles." The court was an external part of the temple, useful in many ways, but not essential. It represents the external organizations and forms of government thrown around the church for her benefit But these are to be defiled by the Gentiles; these external matters are to be desecrated by an ungodly world. "And the holy city they shall tread under feet forty and two months." The holy city, as the place in which God had established His dwelling, represents the social and political relations of the visible church. The world was to enter into this domain, to control those places and influences which of right belonged to God's covenanted people, and to degrade and pollute by its management all the earthly conditions and relations of the church, so as to render them essentially a mere worldly thing.

But what is the meaning of the expression, "forty

and two months"? The same period of time appears in vs. 3 as 1,260 days, if we allow thirty days to the month. Reducing to years, we get three and a half. This appears again in another form in ch. 12:14—"a time and times and half a time" (1+2+½=3½), as in Dan. 7:25, "a time and times and the dividing of a time". Now what is the meaning of this number? As seven is the symbol of Completeness, is it not an easy and satisfactory explanation to take its half as an expression for Incompleteness? The truth brought out, then, is that this desecration of the church and of the holy city shall never be more than partial and temporary, a half success.

The time of this desecration is the same as that of the testimony of the Two Witnesses, the latter being expressed in days, perhaps to indicate the continuity of their work. They shall be clothed in sackcloth, expressive of sorrow and mourning because of the corruption of the church and the prevalence of worldly power. These two witnesses are the two olive trees of Zechariah 4. There it is explained that the golden lamps represent the church as the light of the world, and the two olive trees stand for the two anointed ones (sons of oil), the two great offices through which God's grace and power flowed into the church—the priestly and the kingly, a pure worship and good discipline, as we had it brought out in the first chapter by the seven candlesticks and the seven stars—the Cross and the Crown of Jesus. These witnesses shall be armed with the power of Moses and Elijah. If any one wishes to hurt these witnesses, aims to

injure or destroy holy worship and discipline, he shall be killed by the fire that proceedeth out of their mouths; the rejected testimony shall turn to a flame of wrath. After their testimony is completed, these witnesses shall be killed; when the full revelation of God's truth has been set before the world, the spiritual functions of the church shall, for a brief period, three and a half days, be interrupted by the power and wisdom of the world. And when the spirit of holiness has departed from the services of the church, the world is very willing to retain their lifeless bodies. A dead church is a favorite with the world, especially if it be rich and fashionable and powerful. The corpses of these witnesses it will not suffer to be buried; it rejoices over the fact that the faithful testimony is silenced. "Their dead bodies are in the street of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt: where also our Lord was crucified." Here are three designations of the holy city; under the feet of the Gentiles it is as corrupt as Sodom, as cruel as Egypt, and as blind and unappreciative as Jerusalem. But the death of the two witnesses shall continue only long enough to show that it is real death, that their life depends upon the Spirit of God; and it is in order to the more complete overthrow of the world's power over the church. For after three and a half days the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet. "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, 'Come up hither.' And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud and their enemies

beheld them." As soon as the worship and discipline of the church are revived by the Spirit of God entering into them, they are called up from the merely earthly sphere and from earthly influences into the pure spiritual and heavenly atmosphere. This ascension is a thing that even their enemies are compelled to behold. And it is this spirituality, this separation from all worldly supports and connections, which constitutes the church's triumph. This is symbolized in verse 13—"and the same hour there was a great earthquake and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain seven thousand persons; and the remnant were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven."

The seventh trumpet, like the seventh seal, calls up a vision of victory; the conflict is ended. "The kingdom of this world is become our Lord's and his Christ's, and he shall reign for ever and ever." "And the twenty-four elders, which sat before God upon their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God." The four living creatures are for the first time wanting; because the perfect life of God's redeemed, which they symbolized, is now fully realized by this triumph, in a glorified church, and is adequately expressed by the twenty-four elders. The better texts omit also from vs. 17 the words "and art to come"; the Lord is no longer the coming one, having already come in the fulness of his glory and in the fulfilment of all covenant engagements. After the song of thanksgiving by the twenty-four elders, "the temple of God was opened in heaven and there

was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant." The throwing open of the Holy of Holies probably signifies the passing away of this earthly dispensation, as the rending of the vail of the temple indicated that the Jewish economy had come to an end.

Chapters 12 and 13 present certain *organized* forms of evil—the Dragon, that is Satan, and his two chief agents, Worldly Power and Worldly Wisdom. These chapters may be considered as supplementary to the Seven Trumpets. The woman mentioned in the twelfth chapter is supposed to represent the church of God upon earth, and her child is the Redeemer, "who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (vs. 5). Against these the Dragon makes war, first against her son, who is caught up unto God and to His throne. There follows a war in heaven, in which Satan and his followers are defeated. Next an attack is made upon the church on earth, "the remnant of the woman's seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." This conflict lasts 1,260 days (vs. 6), 42 months, or 3½ years, for "a time and times and half a time." We have already seen that the probable meaning of this symbol is incompleteness. The success of the powers of evil shall only be partial and temporary.

In the first verse of chapter 13 the Dragon is represented as standing on the shore (it should probably be, as in the R. V., "he stood," not "I stood") waiting for a beast to rise from the sea. The word "beast" here is different from the one used to desig-

nate the four living creatures. Here it is a wild beast, the form of an animal suggesting a highly organized means of evil, and the savage nature the character of these worldly forces. The first beast had seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads names of blasphemy, probably impious claims to dignity and authority belonging to God alone. His savage nature is indicated by his likeness to a leopard, a bear and a lion (see Dan. 7:4-7). He is the agent of the Dragon, who gave him power and his throne and great authority. The curing of his deadly wound may indicate Worldly Power changed to ecclesiastical form or to outwardly Christian character. The continuance of his power is for 42 months.

The second beast had two horns like a lamb and spake as a dragon—under a gentle aspect he concealed a malignant nature. This is Worldly Wisdom. He is entirely subservient to the former, working false miracles in his support and giving life to his image; which also itself receives homage, demands submission and exercises power. He is probably the same as the false prophet of ch. 16:13.

CHAPTER V.

The Seven Vials.
God's Wrath Descending.
(Rev. 14–20.)

Three Introductory Visions—

- Three Angels—14:6-13.
- Gathering the Grain and Grapes—14:14-20.
- Security of the Redeemed—15:2-4.

The Seven Vials—16.

Three Supplementary Visions—

- Revolt of World's Wisdom Against a Godless Church—17.
- Feelings Produced by Fall of Babylon—18-19:10.
- The Conflict—19:11-20.

The Seven Vials

After a view of the followers of the Lamb, the introductory visions begin at the sixth verse. The reference to the spiritual Babylon connects them with the supplementary visions, which speak much more fully of her overthrow. Proclamations are made by three angels; the first carries to all nations the command to give glory to God, who is now about to execute judgment; the second announces the fall of Babylon; the third declares that all the votaries of the beast and of his image shall share in the outpourings of divine wrath. Again the followers of Christ are exhorted to be patient under present trials, and are encouraged by an assurance of the blessedness of those who die in Christ's service; for their toil is over and their reward is sure.

Then one is seen on a bright cloud, in human form and with regal dignity, coming to reap the precious grain, while an inferior agent is to gather the grapes from the vine of the earth, that they may be trodden in the wine press of God's wrath.

The ransomed are again seen, engaged in the praise of God. They are by the sea of glass. In the Jewish service some things were purified by water and some by fire (Num. 31:23); so the latter element is added to that which was shown at ch. 4:6.

The seven angels having the seven last plagues

now come forth from the temple, clothed in pure white linen, and having on golden girdles. The last plagues are contained in Seven Vials or bowls, such as were used in the Old Testament service (2 Chron. 4:8); the very incense bowls are used as vessels of wrath. These are handed to them by one of the four living creatures, that is, as has been shown by other figures, God's punishment of His enemies is in response to the petitions of His people, though not in the way in which they ask it. It is in perfect keeping with the structure of this whole book that the four living creatures reappear through this series, after disappearing at ch. 11:16. We are going back now and re-viewing the church's history from a different standpoint. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and no one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues were fulfilled. Thus are shown the presence of God in unapproachable majesty and the exclusion of intercession while the work is going on.

There is a striking resemblance between the Seven Trumpets and the Seven Vials. In the first four the same objects of nature are affected—land, sea, rivers and sun. But whereas, in the former series, the inflictions were partial, here there is no limitation; every living soul died; then the light of the sun was darkened; now power is given to the sun to scorch men with fire. There are no Saving Influences now. The fifth angel poured his vial upon the throne of the beast, and his followers gnawed their tongues

for pain, but repented not of their deeds. And as the spiritual Babylon is prominent all through this series, the sixth angel pours his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared—an allusion to the manner in which the earthly Babylon was captured by Cyrus.

The final conflict is to take place at Armageddon, that is, the mount of Megiddo (cp. Judges 5:19, "by the waters of Megiddo," where Sisera was defeated)—the high ground on which Megiddo stood, adjoining the great plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel, which has been the scene of many bloody battles. It was here that Gideon defeated the Midianites (Judges 7); King Saul was slain in this region (1 Sam. 28:4; 31:6); and here Josiah was defeated by Pharaoh-Necho (2 Ki. 23:29, 30). The great battle and its issues are described in chapters 19 and 20, and we shall recur to this subject when we reach that point.

The seventh angel poured his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying: "It is done"—reminding us of the Saviour's cry before he expired on the cross. The utter ruin of God's enemies is set forth in the earthquake which followed, dividing the great city into three parts, and in other terrific commotions. See further ch. 18.

The first of the supplementary visions (ch. 17) shows to John the great city Babylon as a woman seated on a scarlet monster, gaudily dressed, bearing the enticing cup of intoxication and impurity, and

having her wickedness and cruelty blazoned on her forehead. In the twelfth chapter we had the church presented as a woman; now it is a sinful woman, a godless church, supported by worldly wisdom typified by the beast. When the despotism of this godless church becomes intolerable, the worldly wisdom turns and destroys the very power by which it had been oppressed. All this was taught under the Sixth Trumpet, where the four angels, bound at the river Euphrates, were loosed, and the two myriads of myriads of horsemen appeared.

In chapter 18 and ten verses of chapter 19 the feelings produced by the fall of Babylon are expressed. God's people are warned to come out of her, lest they share in her sin and punishment. Kings, merchants and mariners lament over her fall—"in one hour she is made desolate." "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, 'Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.'" All sounds of pleasure, of business, and of social and family life shall be hushed. Of course, this overthrow can only cause joy to the righteous whose song of glory to God is contained in the first seven verses of chapter 19.

The last part of this chapter and part of chapter 20 give the great battle to which allusion has been made. A victorious rider on a white horse appears, as under the first seal. Now he has many diadems and many followers. We should recognize him from the description: the eyes are as a flame of fire, and out of his

mouth goeth a sharp sword; but he is distinctly called the Word of God, and on that part of his robe which covered his thigh and was particularly conspicuous, a name appeared—"King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Against this conqueror are arrayed Satan, the beast, and the false prophet, the kings of the earth and their armies. In the thirty-eighth of Ezekiel, Gog of the land of Magog is represented as making an invasion of the Holy Land. The same terms are now used to designate the spiritual enemies of the church, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea; and they are now represented as attacking the beloved city. But there can be no doubt on which side the victory will be; and an angel, standing in the sun, cried with a loud voice to all the fowls of the air to come and feast on the bodies of those who shall be slain. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet, and both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. "And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse." "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

In ch. 20:2 it is said that Satan was bound for a thousand years. As the uniform meaning of large numbers in this book has been to express vast multitude or unlimited duration, this would suggest the everlasting overthrow of Satan. The blessedness of God's saints is also set forth by saying that

they shall reign with Christ for a thousand years. This we should expect to mean a never-ending period. On the basis of this chapter the Christian world has been divided into Pre-Millenarians and Post-Millenarians. There are difficulties connected with the subject, owing to the highly figurative character of much of the language.

In the last part of ch. 20 is the judgment scene, reminding us of Matt. 25. All are judged according to their works, not that the righteous are justified by them, but they are required to give this proof that they have accepted the gospel plan of salvation.

The effect upon the righteous of this victory and this judgment is given in the remainder of the book.

CHAPTER VI.

The New Jerusalem.

(Rev. 21–22.)

12,000 Furlongs—21:16.

12 Foundations—21:14.

144 Cubits (12x12)—21:17.

12 Gates—21:12.

12 Angels—21:12.

12 Tribes—21:12.

12 Apostles—21:14.

12 Fruits—22:2.

12 Months—22:2.

The New Jerusalem

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth." Similar language is used in other places; see Is. 65:17 and 2 Peter 3:13. The latter passage adds the distinguishing feature of this new creation—"wherein dwelleth righteousness." No evil shall enter either place causing any of the angels to be cast out or a new race of men to fall. "And there was no more sea." The restless nature of the sea seems to be used here as a symbol of disquiet. Upon this new earth is a new city in which God shall dwell with man, with the same freedom of intercourse that was found in Eden before man sinned. And all effects of the fall shall be removed—"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." The Everlasting One then declares that the spiritual wants of all his creatures shall be satisfied—"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely"; and he shall partake of all the blessedness of admission into God's family. This, however, as we saw in each of the Seven Letters, is promised to him that overcometh, who perseveres in the struggle, until, by the grace of God, the new nature implanted in him in the moment of regeneration has reached its full development. But the cowardly, who, instead of overcoming, shrink from

Christ's service through fear of loss or suffering, must share the fate of the superstitious, the impure, the cruel and the false. "He that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God" (Luke 12:9).

One of the seven angels that inflicted the plagues on the church's enemies appropriately appears as deeply interested in her triumph and glory. He invites the apostle to a view of the Lamb's wife, the church being thus designated as received into permanent union with her Lord. He was carried away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and beheld that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. As the ancient Jerusalem was a chosen type of the church on earth, the glory and blessedness of the church in heaven are set forth by a symbolical Jerusalem, far more magnificent. The description bears some resemblance to what Ezekiel saw (chs. 40-48). "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." The cubical shape indicates symmetry and solidity. Its vast extent, the capacity of heaven, is symbolized by the length of its walls—12,000 furlongs in circuit; and its security is brought before us by the twelve foundations and by the height of its walls, 144 cubits (12x12); its accessibility, to those who come by faith in Jesus, by its 12 gates, facing the four cardinal points of the compass. In all these we find the number 12 and its multiples, a number often used to express completeness. The material used in the city, gold and precious stones, must be

indicative of the choicest spiritual blessings. "And I saw no temple therein." It was all temple. There was no spot specially sacred, consecrated by a limited display of the divine glory and occasional acts of worship; but the whole was hallowed by God's manifest presence. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." "It had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof." As all the enemies of God have been destroyed, there is no necessity for the closing of the gates by day; and there shall be no night there—that is, the revelation of God shall be full and complete. The mention of the 12 angels, the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles, and the statement in vs. 24, "the nations (or Gentiles) shall walk in the light of it," indicate the union of God's faithful servants, both the unfallen and the redeemed, of every economy, of all races, in the glory of heaven. "And they shall see his face" (22:4), a promise made to the pure in heart (Matt. 5:8). Hence there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. "And God's servants shall serve him," not with an unwilling service, but with the whole heart; "and his name shall be in their foreheads."

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." What a beautiful and yet perfectly simple way of saying that eternal life to the

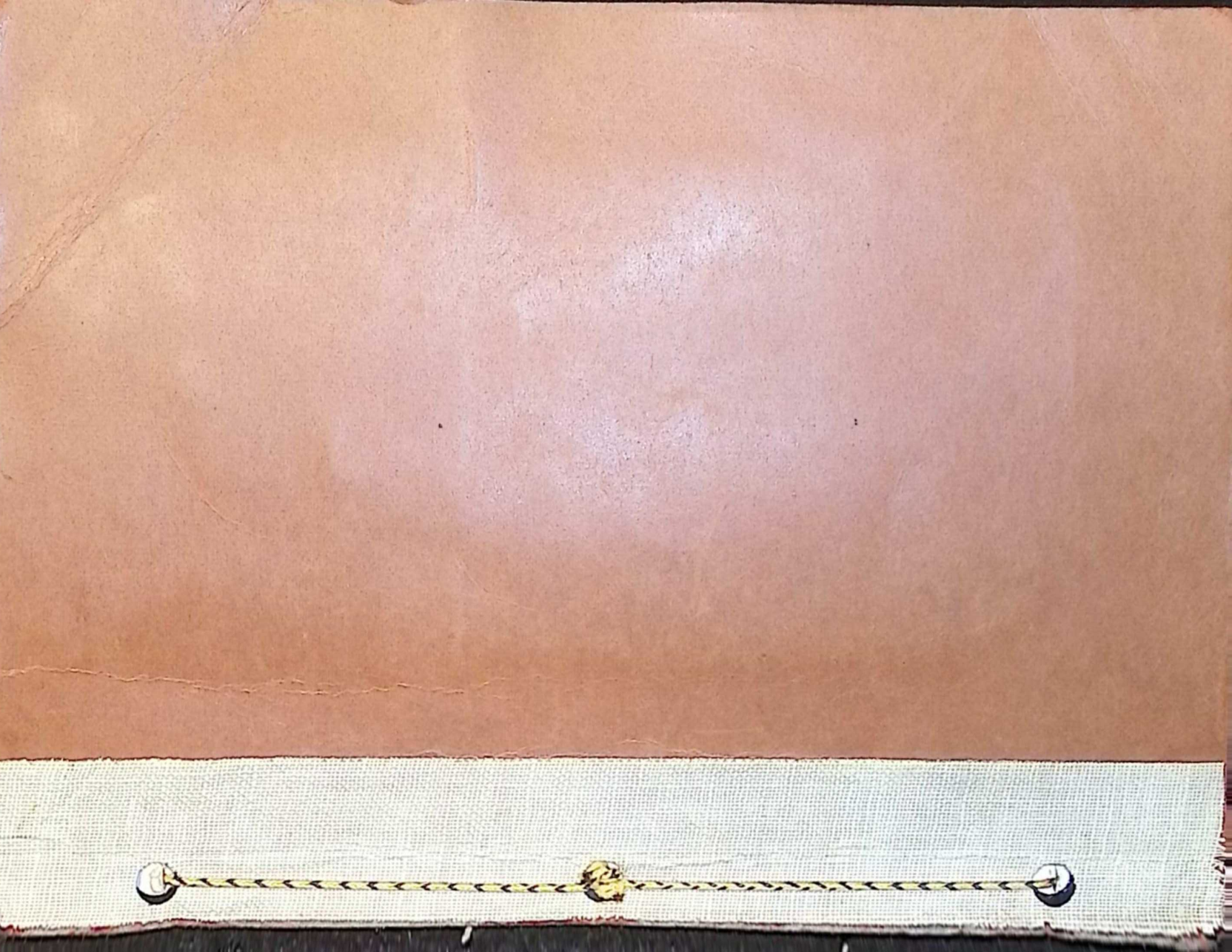
race of sinners is due to sovereign grace and redeeming love! The river was "in the midst of the street, and on this side of the river and on that side was the tree of life." The idea is that of a river running through the city with trees along its banks, and a broad avenue on each side. This tree of life bore "12 manner of fruits"—suited to all classes and all the wants of God's people; "and yielded her fruit every month," 12 times a year—always fresh and ready; "and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations"—every part of it has its use.

This is the city in which the Saviour said there were many mansions, where he was going to prepare a place for his disciples. The description forms a third climax of this book. At the close of the Seven Seals there was silence in heaven, indicating the overthrow of God's enemies; and after the Seven Trumpets there was a song of thanksgiving that the conflict was no longer raging. And now in the last two chapters of the book, after the pouring out of the Seven Vials, we have had presented a magnificent picture, to which scarcely any literature furnishes a parallel; and when we consider the spiritual truths that underlie its figures, there can be no doubt of its infinite superiority to any uninspired composition. There can be no higher praise than to say that it forms a fitting conclusion to the whole Bible.

There are a few parting words from the angel, from the Saviour, and from the apostle. The angel gives assurance that these sayings are faithful and true, and that these messages had been sent by the

Lord God of the holy prophets. When John falls down to worship him, he is prevented and told that his informant is one of his fellow-servants. He is then instructed not to seal up the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still"; if he continues in sin, his doom will soon be fixed; "he that is righteous, let him be righteous still"—an assurance of freedom from temptation to sin. "They that do his commandments shall have right to the tree of life, and shall enter in through the gates into the city."

Jesus, who sends his angel to testify these things, declares, "I come quickly," using the words three times; "blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book," repeating the challenge to attention and observance which was found near the beginning of the first chapter. "My reward is with me, to give every one according as his work shall be" —works being not the ground, but the evidence of salvation. This promise comes from the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last (and all between)—the Eternal One. "I am the root and the offspring of David—the fulfilment of the prophecy in Is. 11:1, "and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." "And the bright and morning star"—when all other dynasties shall have been destroyed, the great Son of David shall retain the glories of the restored theocratic monarchy. To him, then, all are invited to come.

The Holy Spirit speaks this invitation by the bride, the church, as well as in the word. All who hear and accept the divine call should address it to others. The invitation of the Old Testament prophet is re-echoed from the last page of the word of life (Is. 55:1), "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." And to leave no possible doubt of the welcome of anyone, it is stated again in the words, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." A warning is added, lest any be tempted to increase or diminish this prophecy, and a curse is pronounced upon any who might venture to mar the sacred record.

To the repeated announcement, "I come quickly," the writer gives a hearty Amen, and concludes with the apostolic benediction, that part of the service which we are apt to consider as merely formal, but which may contain a blessing for us, if we are ready to receive it.